228 story that Bahrain pearls are superior in colour to all others because of the presence in the seas around Bahrain of numerous fresh-water springs. In fact the real origin of the pearl inspires no romance, it is the process by which the pearl shell rids itself of an unwelcome intruder. The oyster, when opening to obtain food, often admits small particles of sand or some other substance which irritate its soft flesh, the shell therefore covers the intruder with a secretion that forms a smooth coat of nacre. Once this process has started it continues, more and more layers are built up until the process is stopped by the pearl being removed from its shell or when some accident happens to it. If a pearl is cut in half and examined under the microscope the layers of the nacre can clearly be seen.

221 228 The "Gaus al-Kabir" or main diving season takes place from June to early in October, but before and after the season there is the "Gaus al-Bard" or cold diving season, the duration of which is determined by weather conditions, but which is not recognised as the diving season *par excellence*. In former days the departure of the Bahrain fleet for the pearl banks was the occasion of great excitement, and with drums playing and small boys cheering the boats would sail away from Muharraq. After being joined by boats from other coastal towns and villages the fleet would proceed to the pearl banks, where each boat would choose its own anchorage and prepare for diving.

501 228 Formerly the boat built especially for pearl diving was the sambuq (see Chapter VII), but today the most usual boat is the jalibut, while many very small boats with crews of a dozen men go out to the banks. All pearlers are equipped with special oars with square blades, and on arriving at the banks these are tied so that they project over the water. 228 At each oar two ropes are thrown overboard, one attached to a stone or metal weight and the other to a net bag, although the bag is sometimes hung round the diver's neck. The divers then strip to the buff, or content themselves with a narrow loin cloth, they put on nose clips of bone or tortoise-shell and protect their fingers with leather guards. Putting their feet in a loop in the weighted rope, the divers are swiftly let down, each by his Saib or puller, who remains on deck holding the ropes with the careful hand of a fisherman, but more is at stake than a trout or a salmon, for if the Saib fails to hoist the diver to the surface directly he feels his pull on the rope, the diver's life is in danger. When the diver reaches the sea-bed the weighted rope is pulled up while the diver keeps hold on the second rope. While on the sea-bed the diver hacks off with a small knife as many pearl shells as he can, usually collecting about ten shells in the minute and a half he spends below the surface. When exhausted he tugs sharply at the rope and is hauled to the surface. Twelve fathoms is about the maximum depth to which he dives, and it is easy to picture the frantic rush at this depth to collect the necessary shells. On coming to the surface the diver hangs, resting on the weighted rope, while the Saib tips the bag of shells on to the deck. The rest periods vary with the weather. When it is cold the divers spend two thirds of the time resting on the deck of the

241 Almost all the cultivators are Baharna or Hassawis, who are of the
565 Shiite sect, descendants of Baharna who emigrated to Arabia. The
461 Sunni Arabs do not work in the gardens. The people living in the villages which are scattered among the date gardens originally earned their livelihood entirely by working in the gardens; now many of them are employed by the oil company or in Manama. During the date
[221] picking season, which in many ways resembles the hop picking season in England, temporary villages of palm branch huts spring up among the date gardens when people from other parts of Bahrain come to pick the crop.

565 The village people are the aboriginal inhabitants of the country and in the past they suffered much during the many invasions of Bahrain when their homes, gardens and water channels were destroyed and even in times of peace they were regarded as milch cows, whose wealth was extracted by their rulers. But in recent times their position has changed, they are more prosperous than they used to be and are on terms of equality with their neighbours.

BOAT BUILDING

174 It is claimed by some authorities on Middle Eastern history that the Phoenicians originated in Bahrain and sailed their craft up the Gulf, which then extended much farther northwards than it does today. and following the Euphrates to the point where the river is nearest to the Syrian coast, they landed and settled there. This may or may not be true but there is no doubt that the people of Bahrain have been sailors for at least as many centuries as the pearl industry has been in existence and their stitched boats not only sailed the Persian Gulf but entered the Indian Ocean.

501 Most of Bahrain's boats were in former days employed as pearlers,
396 and although the Kuwait shipyards built the largest craft it was natural that Bahrain, nearer the Indian source of timber and itself the centre of the pearling industry, should have its own yards. It should also be remembered that Kuwait is a comparatively modern town, having been founded early in the 18th century, before which date it did not attain importance as a harbour for north-east Arabia.

Today most of the boat building is carried on in Muharraq, although there are some yards at the western end of Manama. In former days, before iron nails were obtainable, Arab boats were not nailed but stitched together, with a giant needle and cord as thread, yet these boats of such fragile construction were able to weather the heaviest gales that swept the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

In recent years launches have been made in greater numbers than sailing boats, so builders have inclined to specialise in the construction of those boats to which engines can best be fitted. For this reason many "jalibuts" have been built, they can be identified by their vertical bow and the straightness of the keel. The origin of this name is doubtful and many suggestions have been made to explain it. Possibly

al-Khamis Mosque and half a mile south of the village there is an inlet of the sea which can be crossed at low tide by a ford which leads to the village of Tubli. 361

Bilad al-Qadim is a Shiite village and was the capital of Bahrain before the Arab conquest of the Islands. It is frequently referred to in local Shiite histories and is described but not named in a number of early Moslem writings. A large area of the town is now in ruins, but its walls and mounds show that it was once a place of considerable size and importance. According to local reports the sandy mound near the School opposite Suq al-Khamis Mosque is all that remains of the fort that protected the town, while the mosque itself was its Friday Mosque. The Thursday Market (Suq al-Khamis), after which the district takes its name, is probably a relic of the time when this was the capital of Bahrain and when goods were brought here from the country for sale, just as today the Wednesday Market serves the same purpose in Manama.

There are several well-known springs in the vicinity including Qasari, which has already been mentioned, the Dhobi Pool and Abu Zaidan. A relic of the old town still stands in the shape of Masjid ar-Rafia, a mosque built over a spring, which is on the west side of the town and contains an ancient Kufic inscription. Date groves and gardens surround the town but many of the inhabitants work in Manama, where some of them own shops. The white buildings in the clearing opposite the Suq al-Khamis Mosque are a Government Boys School and a dispensary. [312]

ADARI

"The Lido of Bahrain" is a description which is often used for Ain Adari (The Virgin's Pool). It is especially applicable in the summer when every evening buses, cars, lorries and bicycles convey people from Manama to the deep, cool blue waters of the pool where they swim or sit about in the public garden or coffee-shop. Adari is the largest natural spring in Bahrain and the stream which flows from it irrigates many acres of gardens. 312 529

Adari was once a very messy pool where camels and donkeys were watered, but it has been developed by the government into a bathing place. The sides of the pool have been lined with cement and provided with steps, there is a mosque, a coffee shop, bathing huts and diving boards, and around the pool a flower garden where oleandar, bougainvillea and ponciana flourish. The road to Adari, which branches off Awal Road, is indicated by a sign-post about half a mile south of Suq al-Khamis. [491]

UPPER AND LOWER SEHLAH

These are two villages on opposite sides of Awal Road. Upper Sehlah is a small village of stone and barasti houses built on a hill overlooking the surrounding gardens; in summer the village expands when the date pickers descend on the village and put up their barastis. 361 245 221